

Dar es Salaam, Tanzania, August 9 (Infosplusgabon) - About 1.26 million people are expected to be severely food insecure in the Grand Sud and Grand Sud-Est regions of Madagascar between July and September 2018, according to the results of the Integrated Phase Classification (IPC) food insecurity analysis conducted in June 2018.

This includes about 400,400 people likely to face emergency food insecurity and nearly 860,900 people expected to be in crisis, the UN Office for the Coordination of Humanitarian Affairs (UNOCHA) said in a report made available to PANA in Dar es Salaam on Thursday.

The UN agency said that the figure represents an increase from the IPC results from March to June, when about 1.06 million people were estimated to be severely food insecure.

“The food insecurity situation is particularly critical in the Grand Sud, where some 950,000 people are projected to be severely food insecure. Grand Sud is an arid zone and was severely affected by El Nino in 2016. Beloha is projected to be the only district in phase 4 (emergency food insecurity) but Ampanihy will also see a serious deterioration.

“While northern and southeast Madagascar have received above average and average rainfall respectively this year, southwest and far south Madagascar have received below average rainfall,” the report said.

Furthermore, Fall Army Worm (FAW) has damaged 15 to 65 per cent of Madagascar's maize crops, according to the UN Food and Agriculture Organization (FAO), with the southwest hardest hit due to the combination of the pest infestation and below average rainfall.

In Beloha district, many households have not recovered from the 2015 to 2017 droughts and are selling livestock in higher numbers and at lower prices than usual. Those who are extremely poor are, reportedly, adopting negative coping strategies, including eating more red cactus fruit and non-mature cassava, as well as eating their seeds.

More than double the number of people in Behola district were reported eating their seeds this year (32 per cent) compared to in 2017 (14 per cent), according to the In-Depth Multisectorial Assessment conducted in March and April.

There are also reports that households are travelling long distances in search of work, and that very poor households who rely on charcoal or firewood for a living are travelling longer distances to collect them.

UNOCHA warned that this heightens protection concerns due to the distances travelled and insecurity in some of the areas being visited to obtain them.

The second quarter of 2018, however, saw a lower number of acutely malnourished children (around 19,000) compared to the first quarter (around 23,600). The number of severely acutely malnourished children also decreased from 2,305 in the first quarter to 1,580 in the second.

In seven out of eight drought-prone districts assessed by the newly piloted Nutrition Surveillance System, proxy global acute malnutrition (GAM) rates were less than 10 per cent, while in Ampanihy they were above the emergency threshold of 15 per cent (17.4 per cent).

Proxy severe acute malnutrition (SAM) rates ranged from 0.3 per cent to 1 per cent. About half of children identified as malnourished were in Ampanihy and Ambovombe.

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